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## RESEARCH REPORT

THE CAREER JOB RESERVATION SYSTEM--IS THE ISSUANCE  
SYSTEM BEST SERVING THE NEEDS OF THE AIR FORCE?

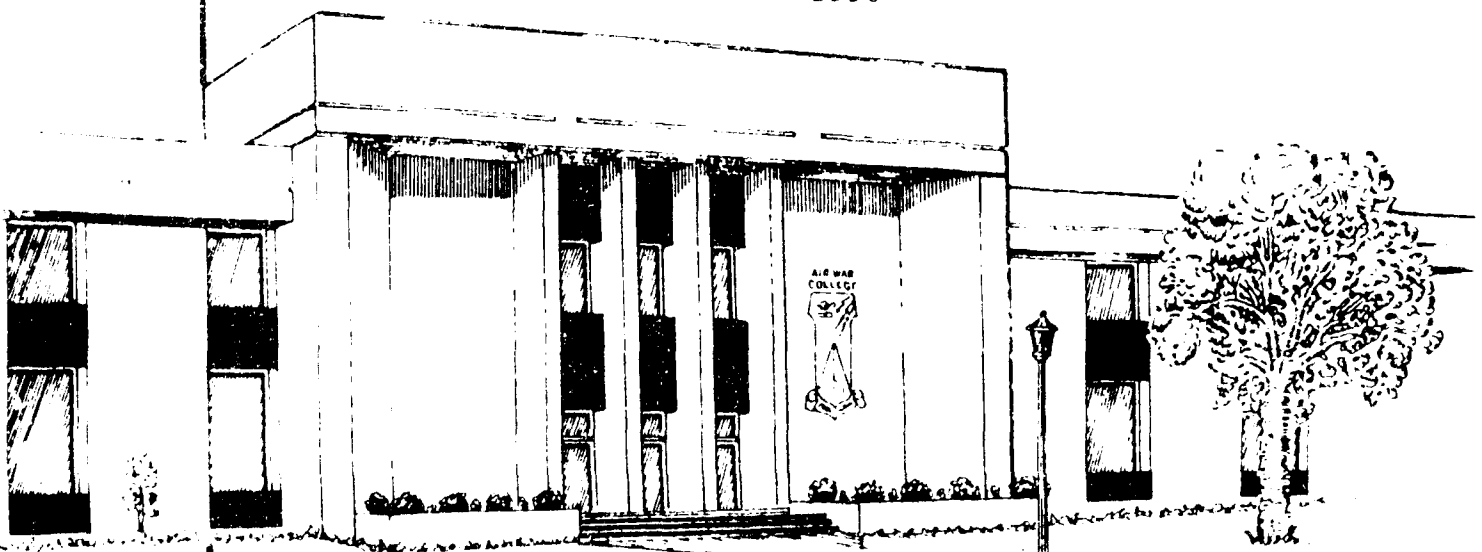
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THE CAREER JOB RESERVATION SYSTEM--  
IS THE ISSUANCE SYSTEM BEST SERVING  
THE NEEDS OF THE AIR FORCE?

by

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A DEFENSE ANALYTICAL STUDY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: The Career Job Reservation (CJR) System--Is it serving the needs of the Air Force? AUTHOR: Ernest V. Marshall, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

The Career Job Reservation issuance system, a part of the Selective Reenlistment Program, functions on a quota basis and is perceived by commanders and airmen to have many inequities. Since the Air Force must restrict the size of the career enlisted force, reenlistment is permitted only if a valid requirement can be filled. To prevent shortages and surpluses, monthly reenlistment quotas are established and controlled by the use of a reservation system. Although the system is serving the basic needs of the Air Force, major changes are in order to remove some of the inequities, correct perceptions, and improve procedures. The proposed changes involve: (1) converting from use of protected months to protected quarters, (2) realigning the priority of quality factors, (3) rank-ordering the waiting list, (4) expanding the eligibility for wing commander overrides, (5) improving publicity and advertising to airmen and commanders, and (6) developing a subjective value assessment score to be given by the unit commander at the time of selection for reenlistment.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Ernest V. Marshall has been a personnel officer his entire career. He has worked in several different commands, at various levels of responsibility, with a wide variety of experience. On two occasions he has served as Executive Officer for a major command Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel. He was selected as the Outstanding United States Air Forces in Europe Military Personnel Junior Manager of the Year (Headquarters Level) in 1979 and the Military Airlift Command Outstanding Senior Personnel Manager (Base Level) in 1984. Colonel Marshall attended the Professional Manpower and Personnel Management School in 1986 and is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1990.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The current Career Job Reservation (CJR) issuance system functions on a quota basis and is determined by many factors including quality force indicators, date and time of application, projected grade, and rank. My thesis, based on input from a wide variety of reliable sources, is that commanders and airmen perceive that there are many inequities in the system that lead to reenlistments of some poor-quality airmen over our better troops and to premature separations of critical trained resources. My research reveals that there is even some misunderstanding and confusion with regard to system intricacies by personnel specialists and major command reenlistment experts. This paper will identify problems with the current system, discuss factors that contribute to perceived inequities, and suggest ways to make improvements.

The CJR reenlistment quota has been in existence since 1 July 1974. "Because of the size of the career force, there is a limit to the number of first-term airmen who can reenlist. Their reenlistment is permitted only if they can fill a valid requirement." (1:41) Consequently, reenlistments of first-term airmen are regulated so as to

prevent surpluses or shortages in specific skills. The current method of issuing CJRs was implemented on 1 January 1984 and divides CJRs into monthly increments.

The OPR for CJR policy is HQ USAF/DPPP, Force Programs Division, Directorate of Personnel Programs. This office determines the number of CJRs to be issued for each skill during a fiscal year based on projected career force objectives. (2:1) HQ AFMPC/DPMATR, Reenlistment Programs and Policy Branch, fulfills management responsibilities by establishing and maintaining a career job requirements file for each Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC). (1:41)



## CHAPTER II

### INEQUITIES, PERCEPTIONS, AND ROLES

The Selective Reenlistment Program (SRP) is the formal name of the program of which CJRs are a part. The goal of the SRP is to ensure that only quality airmen are selected for continued service in the Air Force. The objective is to select only those individuals who consistently demonstrate the ability and desire to maintain high professional standards and are willing to adapt to tough mission requirements. Airmen are carefully considered for further service in the Air Force by supervisors, members in the chain of command, and ultimately the unit commander. The commander retains the authority to select or nonselect an airman for continued service. The commander's decision is based on recommendations from supervisors, a review of the airman's record of performance, possible interviews, and first-hand knowledge of accomplishments. The SRP applies to first-term, second-term, and career airmen, but this paper only deals with first termers. (1:33)

### Inequities

When a program is based on subjective input from various sources, the likelihood of inequity occurring is increased. The SRP in general, and CJRs in specific, are designed so as to keep unfairness to a minimum, but it exists and I believe inequities can be reduced further. The reenlistment selection decision is made by the commander after a review of all the quality indicators available (e.g., Airman/Enlisted Performance Reports [APRs/EPRs], favorable communications, Unfavorable Information Files [UIFs], solicited or unsolicited recommendations, and personal observations).

Although quality force indicators are taken into consideration, it is currently possible for one airman with poor indicators to obtain a quota while another with better quality is placed on a waiting list. This occurs because of the "protected month." If an airman is selected for reenlistment and requests a CJR in his protected month of April he could conceivably get a quota despite the fact that he had a UIF and an eight on his last performance report. Quotas were available and the commander had selected the individual for reenlistment. Many other eligibles of better quality during that protected month opted to separate. The following month, May, a more superior airman with a much better record could be denied a CJR simply because of

availability that particular month. This sort of thing happens all the time with varying degrees of severity and is a fact of life in a subjective system where quotas are issued from a central bank at the Military Personnel Center (MPC) on a monthly basis. The impact on the Air Force should be minimal because both of these individuals were considered reenlistment quality by the supervisors and commander and the quality troop usually is able to either get a quota in a subsequent month or retrain. The impact is great when a commander shuns his responsibilities and selects an undeserving airman for reenlistment.

Another inequity involves the rank-ordering of CJR requests. Currently records of applicants are prioritized in the following sequence:

1. Last three performance reports (EPR ratings are also factored in):  
    9.9.9  
    9.9.8  
    9.8.9,  
    9.8.8.  
    8.9.9, etc.
2. Present grade.
3. Projected grade.
4. Date of Rank (DOR).
5. UIF.
6. Date of application for CJR.

7. Time of application for CJR.

Theoretically, Airman A with straight nines, a DOR of 1 March 1987, and a UIF could get a CJR, while Airman B with all nines, a DOR of 1 April 1987, and no UIF would be placed on the waiting list. The DOR factor is considered before UIFs and the quota cut-off occurred before the better airman got a CJR. Likewise, a staff sergeant with all nines and a UIF could get a CJR before a sergeant who does not have a UIF. Once again, the grade factor is considered before the UIF is taken into account.

Another example could develop when a weaker troop, although not firewalled, had all nines on his APR and possibly a UIF. The much stronger airman had no UIF, two firewalled nines, and a strongly-worded eight. Since three performance reports are considered before moving to the next factor, the weaker airman got the quota and the late bloomer was placed on the waiting list. Disillusioned, the quality member separates from the Air Force. Many other unfair combinations could develop as the factors are currently aligned.

A third kind of inequity occurs when Airman C is unable to obtain a CJR in his protected month of August and is placed on the waiting list. In this scenario the airman has an eight APR on top and a current UIF. In November one

quota remains and it goes to Airman C because he had the earliest date and time of application for his CJR from his protected month. There were no individuals on the waiting list from previous months. Airman D, E, and F had straight nines and no UIF but applied for their CJR in September and October. Rationale provided by MPC: "In 1984 it was believed that we should not bump people who had been on the waiting list the longest--otherwise they would have no hope of ever getting a CJR." (2:2)

The final inequity, but not necessarily the only other one, involves Wing Commander Override (WCO) requests. When a CJR is not available in an airman's AFSC, the unit commander may request a WCO of the career job requirements file. The override request is processed through channels to the Consolidated Base Personnel Office (CBPO) and to the wing commander (unless WCO authority is delegated to the Chief, Personnel Division/Mission Support Squadron Commander).

There are two types of WCO requests, the Demonstrated Superior Performance Override (DSPO) and the Critical Manning Override (CMO).

"To be eligible for a DSPO one of the following conditions must exist:

1. The airman was selected for promotion to or was promoted to the grade of technical sergeant prior to completing 72 months total active federal military service (TAFMS) (6-year enlistees);
2. The airman was selected for promotion to or was

promoted to the grade of staff sergeant prior to completing 48 months TAFMS (4-year enlistees);

3. The airman was promoted to senior airman under the senior airman below-the-zone promotion program;

4. The airman has received a Stripes for Exceptional Performers (STEP) promotion or has been selected for a STEP promotion.

The following factors are considered when submitting a request for a CMO:

1. The airman must possess unique training or job knowledge of special importance to the local mission not found in his or her peers; and

2. The airman is filling a key, one-deep technical or supervisory position; and

3. All other alternatives (permanent change of station, permanent change of assignment, temporary duty, etc.) have been investigated and documented, and a suitable replacement is not available."

(1:44)

The inequity comes when a WCO is approved for Airman A, who was selected for senior airman below-the-zone, but Airman B, who was Noncommissioned Officer of the Quarter twice, and a Professional Military Education (PME) honor graduate, is unable to obtain a quota or an override. Both are equally deserving, but only Airman A qualifies. A case could arise where Airman B was more deserving but would be out of luck because the regulation did not cover his particular circumstances. Other examples include individuals who were selected as Airman or Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, received Air Force-level recognition or distinction, or were selected as a command functional representative of the year (e.g., Personnel Specialist or Finance Specialist of the Year).

Another example of inequities relating to WCOs

occurs when the CMO option is exercised. The provision has been used as a catch-all when the other options are exhausted. A unit commander justifies the case to the approval authority and bingo, member gets a CJR. The observation is that the provision is being abused to take care of superior performers when in fact a true critical manning situation does not exist. When this type of action is taken it indicates a need and desire to expand the WCO provisions. It is a way of beating the system and is considered unfair. Since all commanders will not choose to use this option, an inequity exists.

Granted, some of these examples may never occur and others only rarely. However, it is the isolated case that gets the attention, makes the news, and aggravates people. The fact of the matter is that inequities and work-arounds do occur, as evidenced by questionnaire results to be discussed in Chapter III, and lead to other perceptions that may or may not be true.

### Perceptions

According to the dictionary, to perceive is to become aware of something through our senses, for example, what we see or hear. Perceiving is also coming to understand with our minds, involving insight and intuition. (3:1000) As is often the case, what we perceive to be true is not always so. Too often a judgment is made on too few

facts or even incorrect information.

After personally interviewing at least 25 individuals and sending questionnaires to 68 previous or current commanders, I have determined that there is some misunderstanding of the program at all levels of management--including Base Career Advisors (BCAs), squadron commanders, major command experts, and wing commanders. The following are some actual comments and thoughts received from my contacts, followed by my analysis of the remarks. They are addressed in this chapter rather than in Chapter III because the comments reflect many of the perceptions that exist of the program. If the commanders have these perceptions we should not be surprised when the airmen are confused or disenchanted. If the CJR system is perceived as being unfair or inequitable, then the best interests of the Air Force are not being served. A program that impacts the future careers of every airman must be seen as fair and must be understood at the lowest level.

All of these comments indicate a basic misunderstanding of the CJR system.

"It's all a matter of timing."

"Weak troops sign up early and get the CJRs."

"There's no tie breaker if date and time of application not used."

"Applying on time is very important."

"CJRs are issued on a first-come, first-served basis."

"CJRs are considered by date and time of application--that's why airmen rush to the BCA's office on the first day of the month."



"Timing should not be everything."  
"First-come, first-served is a basic rule in the Air Force." (4:--)

These remarks come as no surprise when you consider that the issuance system and qualitative selection process are not explained in the governing regulation, AFR 35-16.

Consultation with MPC and some professional career advisors, and a review of some MPC talking papers, however, reveals that timing is rarely, if ever, an issue for an airman who applies in his protected month. Granted, if an airman is late and fails to request a reservation in his designated month, then timing becomes an issue. As noted on pages five and six, the prioritized factors actually used to rank-order all CJR requests are: Last three performance reports, current grade, projected grade, DOR, UIF, date of application, and time of application. (2:1)

Several individuals indicated confusion relating to CJR control when a member departs TDY, as indicated by this quote: "If you're TDY, you're out of luck." (4:--) This is not necessarily true. When an airman is TDY and will not return in time to apply for his CJR in his protected month, the BCA is supposed to make contact with the personnel representative at the TDY location and forward the CJR application so that the TDY location BCA can assist the airman with his CJR request. (1:36) This provision is governed by regulation but is somewhat dependent on BCA

initiative. If, however, the BCA fails to act, responds too late, or if there is no one to assist at the TDY location, then there is a provision for the home station BCA to go outside the system to MPC and request a waiver in order to reinstate original standing in airman's protected month. This provision, however, is not covered by regulation and requires BCA experience and initiative which will not always exist.

The next remarks reveal a belief by some that quality is not a factor in issuing quotas after a commander has selected an airman for reenlistment.

"Bright people are exiting because no one cares."  
"The CJR system is ineffective because it doesn't ensure retention of our best airmen."  
"The quality force indicators do not act as discriminators in determining the best people."  
"A system is needed to relatively rank troops within an AFSC to give CJRs to the best."  
"There is no range of quality available to distinguish the good from the average, from the poor, from the unacceptable." (4:--)

The remarks also show some generalizations that are not usually the case. All of our bright people are not exiting because "no one cares." Some will always exit because of various push-pull factors. There will always be people exiting because they perceive that nobody loves them. As a rule, though, we care very much about our bright people. Unfortunately, we are unable to keep them all. The Air Force does use quality indicators to rank-order

applicants. Performance reports and UIFs encompass the major sources of quality data. However, it is the sequence by which the factors are reviewed that poses a problem. In my recommendations I will propose a case for making the UIF the first disqualifier. The remark about the "range of quality" will also be addressed in Chapter IV.

Many commanders were either uninformed or misinformed on the CJR process.

"No forewarning to commander or involvement by him."  
"Involvement by commander only comes after the fact."  
"As a commander you felt you had a limited influence on the process."  
"I would like to have been able to bump some people off (who had a CJR) at times, but I'm not sure it would be fair." (4:--)

A commander should always know if the AFSCs of his enlisted personnel are shortage or overage skills. It would seem inconceivable that any significant amount of time could pass without the subject coming to the commander's attention, verbally or in writing. The indictment that the commanders are not involved is completely wrong. The program belongs to the commander and requires his intimate involvement. He considers supervisor recommendations, reviews and certifies rosters and forms, evaluates duty performance and potential, and makes the selections for reenlistment and continued service.

At a minimum, personal involvement by the commander starts 15 months prior to completion of enlistment (in the

33d or 57th month, depending on length of initial enlistment). In the event an airman is nonselected for continued service, the commander must prepare sufficient written rationale and personally advise the airman. If the commander delegates too much to a first sergeant or othersubordinate, some of the requirements could be pencil-whipped and commanders, consequently, would be out of the picture until "after the fact" when someone from the CBPO or a more senior commander called to enquire about a particular SRP-related problem. The commander has a lot of influence with regard to selective retention, right up to the moment of actual reenlistment. The closer the airman gets to the reenlistment, the harder it is for the commander to reverse his previous actions, but he has plenty of time prior to that point.

Several commanders did not fully understand the waiting list system.

"There are problems with the waiting list."

"The waiting list is a tease."

"CJR system serves the institution and is insensitive to the people." (4:--)

The perception here is that the Air Force uses the waiting list to just string young airmen along, giving them false hopes of getting a future quota. Time will run out and the member will have to retrain into another career field. Some of this is true, to an extent, because a waiting list is

handy for the Air Force in the event extra quotas need to be filled in a subsequent month. However, with proper counseling from the Unit Career Advisor (UCA), BCA, supervisor, first sergeant, or commander, the airman should be made aware of realistic expectations.

For the airman who only wants to work in his current AFSC, the one he is used to and in which he is trained, or for the airman who is optimistic, the waiting list is a good thing. The airman can only stay on the waiting list for ten months. At 150 days prior to his projected separation date his name is removed from the list and he starts separation processing. (1:42) With additional publicity and detailed clarification in the governing regulation, this perception, that the waiting list is impersonal and serves only the institution, can be easily corrected. There are some who would argue that a waiting list is not even necessary, just a waste of effort. An airman would either get a CJR, submit an application to retrain, or project for separation. I do not support this viewpoint because I see some value in the list for both the individual and the Air Force.

The feedback on the wing commander overrides reflects a need for more education on the provision.

"I didn't know there was a wing commander override."  
"Over 450 enlisted personnel and never heard of the Wing Commander Override Program."  
"Wing Commander overrides are inconsistently administered."

"I've been a squadron commander three times, at two different bases, in three different squadrons, for 700 enlisted folks, and never heard of a Wing Commander Override Program. I've also attended untold CBPO and squadron commander orientations and never heard of it."  
(4:--)

The perception reflected in the third quote is that favoritism is used to qualify some airmen for CMOs. Once a wing commander or the designated representative determines that a given airman is critical to the mission, then he can approve an override. It is easy to see how inconsistencies could develop from commander to commander, base to base, and even by command. The CMO was also addressed in the previous section as an inequity. A recommendation to tighten up the provision for CMOs is contained in Chapter IV.

The fact that WCOs are foreign to certain unit commanders is very surprising, especially in large squadrons. I imagine the provision could go unnoticed if the commander never had any constrained skills. In a case in point, however, there were AFSCs with constraints and somehow the commander was never advised of the WCO options. This is an indictment on the BCA and UCA and gives the whole program a bad reputation.

This final set of quotes reflects some of the attitudes and perceptions of our leaders and clearly demonstrates that a publicity campaign or training blitz is sorely needed.

"There are inequities and callousness in the system."  
"A lot of airmen believe the system will take care of them."  
"Lots of complaints from our airmen."  
"Some claimed they never were briefed properly."  
"Many enlisted folks complain about having to commit too early."  
"I am totally unaware of CJRs---clueless."  
"Base Career Advisors less helpful than Unit Career Advisors."  
"Young kids don't understand the system."  
"I was kept in the dark on CJR program...never briefed by the BCA/UCA."  
"CJR issuance system is not generally liked among the troops."  
"Some claimed they were never briefed properly."  
"The Base Career Advisor was essentially useless."  
(4:--)

The "system," referred to in the first quotation, is not callous or fickle; it is a neutral entity designed to help make corrections for shortages and overages in particular AFSCs. Commanders, though, cannot afford to be "clueless" when we are talking about a program that helps create a highly qualified, professional career force for them. Just as one commander will not do as good a job as the next one, every BCA and UCA will not be as competent or dedicated as we might prefer. These remarks point to the need for more training and a more adequate publicity program. The BCA has got to get out of the office and visit in units and with commanders. He should be briefing periodically at commander's calls, first sergeant meetings, and orientations across the base. He should be spending time with UCAs insuring that they know as much about the business as

possible. "Useless" BCAs or UCAs should be replaced.

(1:12) One squadron commander said that he made his UCA position a "plum" assignment and only gave the duty to his sharpest NCOs. Base and Unit Career Advisors are important individuals and play a key role encouraging quality talent to stay with us. We will not always be able to please everyone, but we can reduce the bad press significantly by combatting it with positive information. The lion's share of that responsibility rests with the Unit and Base Career Advisor.

#### Role of the Unit and Base Career Advisor

The success of a commander's enlisted retention program depends greatly on the amount and quality of emphasis provided at the unit level. Although the unit commander owns the program and sets the tone, the real dirt-under-the-fingernails work is performed by the UCA. The person selected for this duty should preferably be a volunteer and in the grade of master sergeant through chief master sergeant. Assignment of assistants is encouraged, especially in large squadrons or where unit personnel are spread out geographically. (1:12)

The UCA identifies his target group as all airmen who have not made a career decision and those who want to reenlist but must retrain. He then tries to make contact with them all by as many different means as possible. He



can confer with them on duty, at the club, at commander's call, at social functions, or athletic events. He should make as great a use of publicity and advertising materials as possible which are available through the Publications Distribution Office and the BCA. (1:12)

One of the UCA's biggest jobs is to be familiar with opportunities in the Air Force, service benefits, and the various retention policies. Another significant task is to keep the commander informed and help him by providing support when commander interviews are required. The best way for the UCA to keep abreast of policies and benefits is to maintain a close liaison with the BCA. The BCA has access to required information and can recommend supplemental reading to help bring the UCA up to speed. (1:12, 16)

The UCA also has a great deal of administrative responsibilities. He must maintain an AF Form 173, Record of Retention Interviews, on each person, suspense and control SRP actions required by the commander, and forward documentation to CBPO at appropriate times for required BCA interviews. (1:17)

When the right person is given the job, the Air Force generally gets favorable results. The UCA is often looked to as a role model and because so many personal contacts are made, should probably be one of the commander's

most respected and more extroverted individuals.

The UCA is a volunteer performing an additional duty and is not expected to be an expert on the Air Force Retention Program. The BCA, however, is the expert and is assigned primary duties as the focal point on the base for enlisted retention matters. As success in a unit program is dependent on an effective UCA, a base program is greatly enhanced by a BCA who establishes good rapport with commanders, staff agencies, UCAs, and all assigned airman. (1:12)

The BCA must have visibility throughout the base. His position is given status by having it aligned directly under the CBPO Chief. A report or briefing is presented to the senior host commander on a quarterly basis. The BCA responsibilities and duties can be very demanding if performed properly and should only be given to NCOs totally committed to their job and the Air Force. Any insincerities, bad attitudes, prejudices, favoritism or laziness detected in BCAs by inquiring junior airmen could be devastating to a base program. (1:12, 18)

The BCA is required to conduct all the training for UCAs. Initial training must be conducted within three months of appointment. Refresher training is provided to UCA quarterly in a joint session. (1:18) A quality base program is greatly a function of the quality of initial and

refresher training provided by the BCA. Any training environment is subject to sloppiness and UCA refresher training should be closely monitored by the CBPO Chief.

The BCA staff is also required to conduct at least a one-hour block of instruction at the Noncommissioned Officer Preparatory Course, furnishing information on the myriad of personnel programs and guidance on career planning. (1:21) If perceptions of inequities in the CJR system exist in the minds of our young airmen, they should be clarified at this time while they are in an academic environment. This is a perfect opportunity for the BCA to make valuable points with our impressionable first termers. This contact must be given priority attention by the BCA.

The BCA also conducts interviews. Within 30 days after an airman has been selected for reenlistment by the commander, he is scheduled for a Career Planning Interview by the BCA. (1:14) At this session the BCA will discuss career options with the airman. He should be prepared to answer questions and help solve individual career problems. The BCA must have a sincere desire to help. The interview is also a time to explain fully the intricacies of the CJR system. This can be an extremely valuable session to the Air Force if conducted properly. It is absolutely essential that the BCA be completely familiar with the advantages of an Air Force career and know a lot of general facts about

the Air Force personnel policies and programs. He is expected to be conversant on service benefits and entitlements as well as work and pay opportunities in the civilian job market. (1:23, 24)

The BCA is also required to conduct staff assistance visits upon the request of the unit commanders or at the discretion of the BCA if program degradation is observed. Until recently there was a yearly requirement to conduct unit visits to the UCAs. A recommendation on this subject will be discussed in Chapter IV. (1:15)

The UCA and the BCA play a critical role in the commander's enlisted retention program. Selecting quality advisors and assistants is the first step in helping to keep perceptions correct and insuring program specifics are properly understood and disseminated. Unit advisors need to maintain a close liaison with the BCA to keep abreast of the latest retention information. Finally, comprehensive initial and refresher training sessions are key to a successful program.

## CHAPTER III

### FEEDBACK FROM QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEWS

As I previously mentioned, I personally interviewed at least twenty-five individuals on the subject of the CJR issuance system and sent 57 questionnaires to lieutenant colonels and colonels at the Air War College who had been squadron commanders within the past five years. I also sent 11 questionnaires to current squadron commanders at Maxwell Air Force Base. The instruments were not designed to provide statistical significance, but rather to gather opinions and suggestions. The statistical breakout of the results is provided merely for informational purposes and as a springboard for possible changes. Of the 68 total questionnaires sent out, 53 were returned, for a 78 percent return rate. Of the 57 that were sent to students and faculty, 48 were returned, for an 84 percent return rate.

#### Results From Questionnaires

The questionnaires provided the following background information to the commander as a refresher on the subject of CJRs:

The current Career Job Reservation (CJR) issuance system for enlisted personnel functions on a quota basis and is determined by factors such as quality force indicators, date, and time of application, and rank. Some commanders and airmen perceive that there are many

inequities in the system that lead to reenlistments of poorer quality airmen over our better troops and to premature separations of disillusioned airmen. Many have indicated that the issuance system needs to be changed. Another perceived iniquity is that wing commanders may bump BT2 senior airmen, STEP promotees, SSgt selectees with less than 4 years, and TSgt selectees with less than 6 years service ahead on the list, using the wing commander's override, while there are no provisions to bump other highly deserving airmen up (wing Amn/NCO of the year, PME honor graduates, etc.)

Even with this information provided, some respondents indicated they had no idea what I was talking about. This was primarily the case in squadrons where only a few enlisted were assigned or where there were no first-term airmen. The questions and the results are reprinted below:

1. Did the airmen in your squadron ever have problems with the CJR issuance system? No\_\_\_\_Yes\_\_\_\_  
Details?

No	35/53	66%
Yes	18/53	34%

2. Did you ever note situations where a weaker troop received a CJR over a quality individual simply as a result of timing or scheduling circumstances?  
No\_\_\_\_Yes\_\_\_\_Details\_\_\_\_

No	40/53	75%
Yes	13/53	25%

3. Did you ever have a circumstance where an airman had to go on the waiting list because he was TDY during his "protected month?" No\_\_\_\_Yes\_\_\_\_ Please comment:

No	49/53	92%
Yes	4/53	8%

4. Do you recall ever having a highly qualified airman separate from the Air Force simply because a CJR was not available in his or her AFSC and member did not want to retrain? No\_\_\_\_Yes\_\_\_\_Please comment:

No	39/53	74%
Yes	14/53	26%

5. Do you consider the current CJR issuance system to be fair? No\_\_\_\_Yes\_\_\_\_Don't know\_\_\_\_Comments?

No	3/53	6%
Yes	22/53	41%
Don't know	28/53	53%

6. Would you favor expanding the Wing Commander Override Program to include other significant achievements such as Wing Airman/NCO of the Year, PME Honor Graduate, Air Force-level performance awards? Keep in mind that each approved override reduces the number of CJRs available to be issued during the fiscal year to individuals serving in that AFSC. Favor\_\_\_\_Do not favor\_\_\_\_Comments?

Favor	30/53	57%
Do not favor	15/53	28%
Left blank	8/53	15%

7. Do you feel that, as a rule, the Base and Unit Career Advisors did a good enough job keeping you and your squadron personnel advised of the option available at the various critical phase points? No\_\_\_\_Yes\_\_\_\_Comments?

No	13/53	25%
Yes	39/53	73%
Left blank	1/53	2%

8. Did any of your quality personnel lose an opportunity to reenlist due to incompetence or inexperience or Base or Unit Career Advisors? No\_\_\_\_Yes\_\_\_\_Not sure\_\_\_\_Comments?

No	44/53	83%
Yes	0/53	--
Not sure	9/53	17%

9. Do you have any ideas on how to change the current system to make it more equitable?

10. Do you have other comments you would like to make and would prefer to do so in person?

### Analysis of Questionnaires

The responses to the first question indicated that a third of the commanders had problems with the CJR system in their squadron. "Problems" usually meant someone did not get what they wanted and did not like the explanation. If the system did not work for them, then something was wrong with the system. Never mind the fact that member applied late, the career field had unmanageable overages, or that member had negative quality indicators or a record that just did not stack up.

The indication from the second question, that a fourth of the respondees noted situations where a weaker troop received a CJR over a quality individual as a result of timing, is that many commanders believe timing is a critical factor. The response reflects concern over the apparent inequity in the system. I would expect an even higher affirmative response if the timing caveat was removed, showing that a larger percentage of the weaker troops end up getting CJRs.

Something that often gets overlooked is the fact that many of the quality troops are unable to get CJRs because during their protected month they are in the middle of their job-search mode and choose not to commit so early. When they eventually make up their minds to stay in the Air Force, no quotas exist and a quality troop ends up



retraining. This is not a fault of the system, merely a side effect.

The third question was included because of an unsolicited remark from a two-term squadron commander. AFR 35-16 covers the procedure for notifying the airman at the TDY location and getting TDY CBPO assistance, but is silent on the advice to send a message to MPC explaining the details if member returns to home station and nothing has been done. MPC advised me that the process was simple and that they are very liberal with approvals if requests are properly documented. It is interesting to note that of ten BCAs polled on this very issue only eight responded correctly and knew of the option to request a waiver from MPC.

The response to question four highlights the need for a better issuance system. If 26 percent of the commanders I polled have seen quality troops separate because CJRs were not available, then we need to address the problem of rank-ordering our prospects and propose some changes. We cannot afford to lose that much quality to a less-talented resource.

The responses to the fifth question, concerning opinions on whether the CJR issuance system was fair or not, are interesting because almost 60 percent either do not know or believe it is unfair. This percent is much too high for commanders in our Air Force. First of all, the system has

to be fair if it is going to have any credibility at all. Secondly, our commanders need to know enough about the system to be able to defend it to the troops for whom it is designed.

Question six dealt with the WCO. Less than a third of polled commanders, and only four of the thirteen BCAs I personally called, were not in favor of expanding the program. This response clearly indicates a desire by commanders to have a means by which they can impact a CJR decision in unusual, compelling circumstances. The feedback I received indicates that commanders believe strongly that high quality is worth the extra effort to retain. Those opposed to a change generally were concerned that flood-gates or Pandora's box would be opened. Actually, only a few instances would exist because, in fact, most of the "cream" would already have risen to the top and either got promoted early or received a CJR based on their quality indicators.

Responses to question seven, relating to opinions on the quality of BCAs and UCAs, were disappointing. When a fourth of the polled commanders indicate that their retention experts (base or unit) were not doing a good enough job keeping them informed, a serious breakdown has occurred. Recent program changes no longer require BCAs to conduct yearly staff assistance visits (SAVs). Before the

change, UCAs received an annual SAV and commanders received an oral outbrief followed by a formal written report. Another change deleted the requirement for BCAs to brief at commander's calls. UCAs must now perform that function annually. These two changes did nothing to enhance the image of BCAs. Recommendations are in Chapter IV.

Question eight asked if the commander was aware of anyone who lost an opportunity to reenlist due to incompetence of the UCA or BCA. Fortunately none were known, but after answering the questionnaire, nine were not sure. This question also shows results that indicate a need for more comprehensive training for UCAs and commanders.

#### Verbal Feedback

Besides sending out the 68 questionnaires, I also personally called the experts assigned to four large major commands and ten BCAs. The BCAs represented three Tactical Air Command, two Military Airlift Command, Strategic Air Command, and Air Force Logistics Command, and one Air Training Command base covering, geographically, the entire United States.

I spent 10-40 minutes talking with each of them and was able to determine, that on the subject of rank-ordering within the CJR issuance system, eight of ten BCAs were either ignorant or misinformed. Two of the four major command experts had incorrect information or just did not

know. It is no wonder a perception develops (25 percent of those surveyed) that our BCAs are not getting the job done. None of our BCAs are expected to know everything about every program and policy in the Air Force. However, they all should be able to explain to an inquiring airman or commander how the system arrives at a rank-ordered list of career job applicants. If the perception exists that the system is unfair or that there are inequities, then it is incumbent upon the BCA to determine the root causes of the problem and provide a satisfactory explanation. If he has not already done so, he should then bring the issue formally to MPC's attention through his major command.

The questionnaires and verbal feedback do not prove anything statistically, but they do demonstrate clearly that inequities exist in the system, confusion prevails on how the system works, and commanders prefer a greater say in the WCO program as well as the overall SRP process. In the next chapter, several recommendations are made to help correct deficiencies and improve the selective reenlistment process.

## CHAPTER IV

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations discussed in this chapter will be presented, for the most part, in the sequence the related subject was introduced in Chapter II as an inequity or perception.

#### Regarding Inequities

Four areas were addressed where I believe inequities exist and need to be corrected. The first, dealing with differing degrees of quality between protected months, is the most difficult issue to resolve. Before the change in 1984, CJRs were issued for protected quarters. The system was disliked by airmen and commanders because quotas were exhausted in the first half of the quarter and individuals whose 35th-month anniversary did not occur until the third month of the quarter were often out of luck as quotas were exhausted. So Air Force changed the system to provide instead for protected months. The complaint with this system is that the quality factors that are used to rank-order the applicants are applied to too small a population within a given month. RECOMMENDATIONS: Return to protected quarters, but allow all applicants whose 35th anniversary falls within the quarter to apply on the first

day of the quarter. This will provide a larger grouping of applicants and insure a better distribution of talent. A second recommendation is to require our commanders to give more attention to the quality force program and strongly encourage them to eliminate poor performers earlier in their initial enlistment. Commanders should also be nonselecting the weaker troops for reenlistment through the SRP process. The second recommendation can only be implemented if interest and personal attention are brought to the subject by senior leadership. Wing commanders, staff judge advocates, and senior personnel officers need to make this subject a matter of priority.

The next proposal deals with the rank-ordering of quality factors used to prioritize the CJR requests. The left column provides the current sequence used to select the best applicants for reenlistment. The column on the right is how I propose the factors should be considered.

<u>CURRENT</u>	<u>PROPOSED</u>
APRs/EPRs	UIF
Grade	APRs/EPRs
Projected grade	Measure of Merit*
DOR	Grade
UIF	Projected grade
Date of application	DOR
Time of application	Date of application

\* To be discussed in next section.

A full discussion of the problems related to the current system is contained in CHAPTER II under "Inequities."

RECOMMENDATIONS: Implement the proposed sequence as indicated above. Since the objective of the SRP is to select only those airmen who maintain the highest standards and demonstrate the greatest potential for continued service (1:33), it would seem logical to drop all those airmen to the bottom who have a current UIF.

The second factor should be based on the last three performance ratings. Next should be a numeric evaluation assessed by the unit commander at the time of SRP selection. A discussion of this proposal will come later. The remaining factors are as currently reviewed, except time of application is deleted since it really shows nothing of qualitative significance. When the change is made to the system, thoroughly advertise it and include a clear explanation of the process in AFR 35-16.

The third inequity deals with the CJR waiting list. Currently, "The CJR waiting list is kept by date and time of application, name, and AFSC." (1:42) In July, when a quota finally comes available, the weaker troop, placed on the waiting list in February, will get a CJR before any better quality airmen who may have gone on the list in March, April, May, or June. RECOMMENDATION: Rank-order the waiting list the same way CJRs are sequenced. If we are

going to emphasize quality in our selection process, we need to apply the quality measures consistently. The major objection to rank-ordering the waiting list is that an airman's number may continue to change as additional people are added to the list. I only see this as a minor irritant for the airman while a major benefit to the Air Force. An airman who finds himself continually slipping off the list should get the message that the competition is stiff, and he should either retrain or opt to separate. I believe this change will encourage more undecided airmen to make their decisions earlier.

The fourth inequity relates to the WCO requests. Currently, DSPOs are only available to a small number of eligibles. Many other airmen have demonstrated equally superior performance by other means but do not technically qualify for an override. RECOMMENDATIONS: Expand the criteria to qualify for an override to include individuals who meet any of the following conditions:

1. Selected as Wing Airman/Noncommissioned Officer of the Quarter or Year.
2. Selected as Squadron Airman/Noncommissioned Officer of the Quarter/Year two or more times.
3. Winner of the John L. Levitow Award and Honor Graduate distinction at a professional military school.
4. Selected as the command functional person of the year in your AFSC.



5. Selected for an Air Force-level recognition.

If a situation was to develop where a distinguished performer was unable to obtain a CJR, commanders need a provision whereby they can put forth the extra effort to ensure retention of a quality resource.

The second part of the recommendation deals with CMO applications. Because of the problems referred to in Chapter II, changes need to be made to better define this provision. An application for an override using critical manning as justification should receive prior coordination by message from Personnel at the major command headquarters. This requirement will help reduce abuse of the option. When the changes are made to the program, they need to be publicized widely. Too many of the commanders interviewed had no knowledge or insufficient knowledge of the override system.

#### Regarding Perceptions

The first incorrect perception discussed in Chapter II was that timing of member's application was the critical factor in the CJR process. RECOMMENDATIONS: Since incorrect perceptions are usually the result of poor communications, a concerted effort needs to be made to emphasize to all first-term airmen that quality will be the prime consideration when selections are being made for continued service in the Air Force. Timing will only be a

factor if the member procrastinates and fails to apply for a quota when first eligible. Program specifics should be spelled out clearly in career development course material and should also be a part of a handout that MPC should develop for mandatory use in the Noncommissioned Officer Preparatory Course. Career Advisors should already be presenting specifics during their briefing to the students.

AFR 35-16 also needs to be changed to clarify what factors are used and in what sequence. MPC needs to publish the facts so that as many people as possible will be made aware of the process. At a minimum MPC needs to get immediate clarification to BCAs Air Force wide. A periodic Air Force News Summary article should be prepared for mandatory run in base newspapers to stress the Air Force emphasis on retaining quality.

The second perception was that airmen who are TDY during their protected month and are in a constrained skill are out of luck and must go on the waiting list.

RECOMMENDATION: Advertise the waiver provision in the regulation. Currently AFR 35-16 only addresses the standard procedure and is silent on the option to request reinstatement in member's protected month when unusual or mitigating circumstances dictate. (1:36)

The complaint of one commander was that, "There is no range of quality available to distinguish the good from

the average, from the poor, from the unacceptable." While we do have a way to distinguish the "unacceptable" and preclude their reenlistment, a "range of quality" among reenlistment-eligible airmen is not as distinguishable and some would say is nonexistent. The advent of the new Enlisted Performance Report will help greatly since an attempt has been made to preclude inflation of the ratings. However, it is not enough and commanders, as documented from comments on my questionnaires, are calling for additional input. RECOMMENDATIONS: The Air Force needs to develop an additional value assessment score to be given by the unit commander at the time of SRP selection. Once assessed, the squadron personnel clerk would be tasked to input the score into the Personnel Data System. The score would flow to MPC where it would be included with all the other quality factors to determine a rank-ordering based more equitably on quality indicators.

I recommend the assessment be called a Measure of Merit as referenced earlier in this chapter. It would be the third priority factor used to discriminate quality after UIFs and performance reports. Instructions to commanders should be comprehensive and would read something like this:

Use a 100-point scale. Keep in mind that the airmen you are rating have already been considered suitable quality for reenlistment in the United States Air Force. Assess a score that will be a subjective quality measurement based on your observations of all other first-term

airmen in their specific AFSC. The score will be one of seven indicators that will be used to rank order applicants for a career job reservation. Consider the following guidelines before assessing your scores.

0-50 Airman eligible for reenlistment but of marginal quality as compared to peers. If cuts must be made, this airman should be among the first to be placed on a waiting list.

51-70 Airman eligible for reenlistment and of average quality as compared to peers. Member shows some potential for career status and demonstrates good skills that could be further developed for the benefit of the Air Force.

71-85 Airman eligible for reenlistment and is above average quality as compared with peers. Member shows good potential for career status and demonstrates exceptional skills that should be developed further for the benefit of the Air Force. Member has never had a UIF and is not presently on the Weight Management Program (WMP).

86-100 Airman most eligible for reenlistment and is far above average quality as compared to peers. Member shows outstanding potential for career status and leadership, demonstrates superior skills, and should be retained above all others. Member has never had a UIF, is not currently on the WMP, and has consistently demonstrated the capability and willingness to maintain high professional standards and dedication to Air Force mission requirements.

When a commander is asked to rate his airmen with these guidelines, he will be less inclined to complain that, "A system is needed to relatively rank troops within an AFSC to give CJRs to the best." He will also have the opportunity to give a boost to a "late bloomer" but not one of such significance that it would propel the airman unfairly ahead of more deserving individuals who have performed well over the long haul. Quality is currently a

factor in CJR sequencing, but it is not nearly significant enough. When the factors are re-prioritized and when the commander's Measure of Merit is added to the process, we will have a credible and more equitable system. Commanders will no longer need to feel that they only have a "limited influence in the process."

My final proposals deal with a miscellaneous grouping of perceptions where the underlying complaint dealt with a lack of information or dealt with a poor understanding of program specifics. A program of such great importance to the individual, the commander, and the Air Force should be understood by all parties. RECOMMENDATIONS: These proposals fall into two areas: (1) those that apply primarily to the airman, and (2) those that apply primarily to the commander. To meet the needs of the airman, MPC first needs to develop an intensive publicity campaign. This media blitz could be done in conjunction with an announcement concerning implementation of other changes that I have proposed. To ensure maximum coverage, the following minimum sources should be used:

- Base newspapers running Air Force News Summary articles
- CBPO-coordinated daily bulletin articles
- Air Force Times article
- Suggested remarks for commander's call
- Notices printed on Leave and Earnings Statements

The next step would be to take measures to provide for on-going reminders and updates. One way to accommodate this is to require UCAs to brief commander's calls semiannually instead of the current annual requirement. At the same time, commanders should be encouraged to periodically invite BCAs to their commander's calls to provide updates on program specifics, entitlements, and service benefits. Recent changes deleted the requirement for an annual BCA briefing at commander's calls. Although not required, they should be encouraged. Besides providing a service to the airmen, the periodic briefings will help encourage the BCAs to keep abreast and conversant on the issues. Another means to ensure an on-going flow of correct information is to implement the previously mentioned suggestion to have MPC develop a standard handout to be issued and briefed at the enlisted professional military education courses.

The second major party in need of more exposure to the program details is the unit commander. Unfortunately, the Air Force has no training program for new commanders. You get your guidon, a handshake, and a pat on the back; then you are on your own. If the commander is lucky, he will have a staff that will guide him along through the tough initial months of responsibilities. The process, however, should not be so personality dependent. MPC needs

to ensure through the major commands that every new commander is given a copy of an up-to-date Squadron Commander's Handbook. The book should contain a more detailed explanation of the Selective Reenlistment Program. The handbook is not designed to replace, but rather augment, reference, and expand on the governing regulation. Reenlistment specifics also need to be a part of major command squadron commander orientations, conferences, and seminars. CBPOs should also include the training during their orientations for new commanders.

As previously discussed in the third section of Chapter II, the commander's key interface for reenlistment program information is provided by the UCA and BCA. Currently, the UCA is required to, "keep the unit commander informed on all aspects of the unit retention program." (1:12) Commanders need to make sure regular interface is established and periodic updates are provided by their UCAs.

Before the regulation was changed, BCAs were required to conduct annual SAVs to every unit retention program. Besides providing administrative guidance and assistance to UCAs, the SAV provided the commander with a face-to-face session with the BCA. I recommend the SAVs be reinstated unless specifically refused by the unit commander. If a commander is comfortable with his program, he should have the option to pass up a visit.

Lastly, I believe more emphasis should be placed on the required quarterly refresher training provided by the BCA for all UCAs. From my personal observations, this is an area that can get very lax unless some form of periodic oversight is provided. The CBPO Chief or senior enlisted personnel representative should periodically attend this training to help keep the sessions from becoming informal social gatherings. At a minimum, the CBPO Chief should review and approve the training objectives or lesson plan. Training for the UCA, who is the commander's primary assistant for retention matters, should be a priority task for BCAs. Properly trained unit advisors will help ensure that unit commanders are better informed.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

In this paper I have identified several problems with the CJR issuance system. Some of the problems are the result of inequities in the system and others are caused by perceptions that need to be corrected. My recommendations address each of the major problems brought to my personal attention through questionnaires and interviews. If implemented, they will correct what I determine to be serious deficiencies in the Air Force Selective Reenlistment Program.

At present the Career Job Reservation issuance system is serving the basic needs of the Air Force, but major changes are in order to remove some of the inequities, to correct perceptions, and to improve procedures.

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## GLOSSARY

AFSC	Air Force Specialty Code
APR	Airman Performance Report
AWC	Air War College
BCA	Base Career Advisor
CBPO	Consolidated Base Personnel Office
CJR	Career Job Reservation
CMO	Critical Manning Override
DOR	Date of Rank
DSP0	Demonstrated Superior Performance Override
EPR	Enlisted Performance Report
MPC	Military Personnel Center
SAV	Staff Assistance Visit
SRP	Selective Reenlistment Program
STEP	Stripes for Exceptional Performers
TAFMS	Total Active Federal Military Service
UCA	Unit Career Advisor
UIF	Unfavorable Information File
WCO	Wing Commander Override